



Youth Work Ireland

Be Part of It

STRATEGIC PLAN

2015 - 2018

Vision

Youth Work Ireland's vision is of a world full of possibilities for all young people

Mission

Together with young people we learn tools for life, foster dreams, offer hope and realise our greatest expectations

Values

- We believe in local services led by local people
- We believe that we are stronger working together
- We always see the best in people
- We trust each other
- We value people's opinions
- We believe in the positive contribution of youth work
- We value the contribution of all volunteers
- We believe that we can and do change the world
- We value leadership by young people
- We value learning
- We value voluntary participation
- We believe in serious fun

About Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland works to develop the potential of young people and to strengthen communities in Ireland through quality youth services. Young people are at the heart of the organisation and are supported with excellent standards in volunteers, leaders, staff and services.

We are an independent non-governmental national youth organisation, established over 50 years ago, and a federation of local services run by local communities. This gives us a number of advantages in terms of reach and efficiency in delivering our work at minimum cost with maximum impact. Our Integrated Youth Service is responsive to local demand and not prescribed or top down. It harnesses the goodwill and voluntary effort of local people because of this. Our services are closely aligned with Local Government, ETBs and CYPSC's working in these communities and able to form key strategic partnerships to deliver locally on national priorities. Equally, our national role allows us to take a unified approach and channel the local experience into national policies and practice.

In 2013 our **22 members** around the country spent **€31.4m** on services for young people in local communities across 25 counties. There were just over **51,000** young people participating in YWI targeted work such as:

- SPY Projects, work with the most disadvantaged young people for example in Clare **improving literacy**, in Monaghan providing **alternatives for early school leavers** and providing **crisis intervention** for teens in Limerick
- HSE Projects such as our **youth counselling** services build young people's resilience and promote positive mental health
- Garda Diversion Projects **reduce offending behaviour** and promote pro-social outcomes in 37 communities
- Projects supported by local authorities such as **Neighbourhood Youth Projects**
- Local Authority supported projects such as **Youth Centres**
- Employment Projects have led to **significant progression to employment**, certified training and workplace relevant experience for young people
- EU programmes promoting **intercultural learning**

Our **352 clubs** had **18,514 young people** participating dividing 50:50 in terms of gender. We had **3,700 people volunteering** with our youth clubs in the same year and **6,019 volunteers in total**. Our network of Youth Information Projects had **109,148 contacts** which we estimate to represent **36,383 young people**. We employed **630 staff** in 2013 and **419 employment scheme participants**. Overall we estimate we worked with **106,060 young people** in 2013 representing approximately **20% of young people in the 10-19 age group**.

In this way our model maximizes voluntary impact, combines funding, policy and practice in an integrated holistic way and responds to the needs of local communities. This enables us to deliver our model throughout the country. Our work locally identifies best practice and our federal model provides opportunities to roll out and share such practice when identified. Similarly, our federal budget crosses the different policy outcomes in Better Outcomes - Brighter Futures.

We have developed considerable infrastructure around the country including youth and community facilities, Drop in Centres, Youth Information Centres and Youth Cafes which are recognised as important modern facilities responding to the cultural and lifestyle needs of young people today. These are designed in conjunction with young people, are drug and alcohol free spaces fully loaded with technology and highlight healthy eating. They serve as a hub for various youth interest groups.

1. External Environment

Over the course of this plan the importance of the outcomes in the **Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Framework** was apparent. The new National Youth Strategy has its basis in this Framework and reaffirms the five national outcomes for young people. Youth Work Ireland currently delivers under each of these outcomes and seeks to describe its work under in these areas. Similarly, there is an ambitious **EU Youth Strategy for 2010-18**, which has two overall objectives:

- To provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the job market
- To encourage young people to actively participate in society.

The last number of years have seen a radical deterioration in the position of the Youth Work sector. The sharp cuts in funding (some 6 times the rate of general cuts to public expenditure have led to major reductions in services, staff and work with young people. Young people have suffered most in this recession according to all independent commentators.

The context in which we deliver this work is changing rapidly. While the last number of years have seen the worst of times economically it now seems clear that we are entering a more stable period but one of very modest recovery with quite a differentiated pattern around the country. Demographically we are approaching a rapidly increasing youth population in the next few years. **After 2014 every year that passes will see an increase in size of all age cohorts between 10 and 20 years of age.** A greater proportion of these will be in urban and suburban areas, (young people make up a greater percentage of the population in rural areas). We will scale up our services to meet this demand. We are open to greater and more streamlined organisational methods and combinations to achieve our goals.

Many more children and young people will have been born outside Ireland or have parents who were born outside Ireland. Young people under the age of 20 make up a much greater percentage of the population outside of urban areas. Across the remit of Government policy there are challenges for young people. In health the **Vision for Change** remains a challenging document for mental health reform as does the **National Substance Misuse Strategy**. The reform of the JCSA and **successive reports of the NCCA** highlight the need for change at second level. In getting people back to work the focus on **Pathways to Work** has yet to be rolled out to young job seekers and the **Youth Guarantee** has had little impact on young people we are working

with to date. While **One World One Future** charts change in our aid programme such an approach does not capture the totality of young people's global view and ambitions. A number of key challenges remain for young people; they are categorized under the outcomes from the Better Outcomes -Brighter Futures Policy Document:

Health and Well Being: Mental Health Services for young people remain fragmented, youth services are well-placed to contribute to a community based response. We are in a period of immense change in the organisation and delivery of our health services and we need to ensure young people's needs are not forgotten. Health promotion is a major area of work for youth services and can grow. Obesity and alcohol misuse remain too prevalent in our youth population. Mental health is a consistently nominated issue of concern for young people in Ireland with a number of national youth parliament (Dáil na nÓg) meetings in the past 10 years identifying mental health initiatives as their top priority. At the most recent Dáil na nÓg, the recommendation that received the most votes, was to have a National Youth Gathering for 2nd level students, with music and events to improve attitudes towards mental health. Consultations with young people in Ireland indicate that the most effective help for addressing mental health is the provision of safe spaces (OMCYA, 2009) including youth clubs and youth cafes.

Youth work contribute to this outcome in many ways; in Youth Work Ireland this can be through specific outcome-oriented programmes such as the Friends for Life programme delivered in Carlow Regional Youth Services, which has been proven to reduce levels of anxiety in programme participants (NBSS, 2013). In a more general sense, Youth Work Ireland, through all of its work with young people provides a significant protective factor in a young person's wellbeing through simply providing young people with a significant positive adult in their lives. Positive adults have been proven to have significant impacts on the well-being of young people in Irish research (Dooley and Fitzgerald, 2013).

Additionally, all youth work provides health promoting activities and opportunities for young people. Taken together the net value of health related benefits realised through youth work in Ireland as € 89,455,764 (Indecon, 2012).

Learning and Development: The majority of young people are well served by our education system but a substantial minority are not usually the most disadvantaged. The process of curriculum reform designed to address some of the reasons for this is proving difficult to deliver in an efficient and timely manner. The formal system needs to change and clearer and better understood links need to be made with formal and informal education to ensure young people's life chances can be changed rather than simply consolidated by our education system.

Formal education is an abiding concern of young people in Ireland and the formal education system has been identified by young people as the best and worst thing about their lives (DCYA, 2012). Children and young people said that the top thing they would change are aspects of the formal education system - to have better school facilities and resources; have bigger classrooms; change the points and exam system; use more continuous assessment; reduce high costs of books and uniforms; and spend less time in school. Young people's lack of voice in formal education is an ongoing issue and one that will NEED TO be addressed in the forthcoming DCYA participation policy.

Research into the purpose and outcomes of youth work in Ireland has established that through non-formal learning youth work assists significantly with the personal development of young people and also "contributes to their success in formal educational terms" (Devlin and Gunning, 2011). These findings have been reinforced by more recent European Commission research that identified that youth work assists in formal educational achievement in at least two ways. Youth work "helps young people to develop emotional and social skills such as persistence, motivation and interpersonal skills, etc." positive influence on academic achievement and attainment of qualifications" (European Commission, 2014, 142). Additionally, as Devlin and Gunning (2011) noted, youth workers contribute to addressing early school leaving by acting in "cooperation

with schools to prevent early school leaving and provide alternative measures to support young people who left education and training too early, “(European Commission, 2014, 142).

Safe and Protected from Harm: The Government has been extremely busy in the legislative field with the Garda Vetting Bureau Act 2012, the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and the Children’s First Bill here and this means considerable change for local providers. A period of consolidation is needed to ensure services coping with less funding and increased demand can deliver on this change. More broadly youth clubs, groups and projects can offer the critical safe space that many young people need. Key groups also need special attention such as those in care and emerging from care, Travellers, LGBT youth and asylum seekers to mention just a few. With young people increasingly connecting online this will be a critical area for supporting young people living safely. The National Quality Standards for Volunteer-led Youth Groups also supports an inclusive role for youth clubs. Ambitious plans have been developed to combat bullying in the education sector with a particular focus on LGBT students.

We know from the Youth Work Ireland Voices of Youth young people’s event in 2011 *Your Right to Know*.

Your Rights that young people involved in family law and social work processes generally identify a lack of consultation and involvement in case conferences and decision making about situation as a concern and that an advocate such as youth worker can be of great assistance to them. This is reinforced by the finding of the national consultation process *Listen to Our Voices* (2011) conducted by the DCYA with young people in care who readily identify youth work person or agency that afforded a young person time, was very significant in the lives of young people in care. From the three consultations, it was clear that young people in care did not mind who or what role the person played in their lives as long as they knew that they had one person on whom they could rely, go to for help or be listened to.

Besides the basic child protection functions that youth work services provide, several international studies note the capacity of youth work to help young people to adopt behaviours and competencies that will assist young people in keeping safe (Department for schools, children and families, 2010, Dickson et al 2013.) In the Irish context, the evidence that Garda Youth Diversion programmes are effective in this regard is fully accepted and the current policy framework for children and young people states that the Government recognises “the success of Garda Youth Diversion Projects in diverting ‘at risk’ young people from crime and a criminal record and re-engaging them with a belief in their own potential” (DCYA, 2014, p.80).

Economic Security: Youth Unemployment remains too high at 26.5% and our rate of young people not in employment education and training is the third highest in Europe. Over 35,000 young people are still leaving the country every year. After some time, Europe and the Irish Government have committed to a plan to deal with youth unemployment through a Europe wide Youth Guarantee. The role for youth services needs to be enhanced in this area and we have local practice that can be built on. Child poverty is still a major problem in Ireland and key groups are at risk. It is important to maintain a continuing focus on disadvantage in our work. Similarly assisting young people in beginning their labour market journey and avoiding a carousel of low pay and employment schemes is important.

A 2013 consultation with young people conducted by the DCYA Participation Team made up of DCYA, Youth Work Ireland and Foroige staff found that young people identified the following barriers to work:

- Lack of opportunities to gain experience
- Lack of opportunities to get the necessary education, qualifications and skills

- Discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, mental health and criminal record
- Lack of transport
- Lack of confidence

Youth work has long been seen to provide those “soft skills” that are required by employers and that assist young people to acquire and succeed in employment. These skills are often referred to as personal skills, interpersonal skills, self-management and competences in initiative and delivery. A recent Expert Group Report on *Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability* endorsed the claim that youth work makes to contributing in this way. The *Expert Group* cited research evidence that demonstrated that “these skills are broadly consistent with the outcomes that are most commonly associated with youth intervention activities such as relationships with others, sense of self, values, beliefs and future aspirations” (European Commission, 2014, 19).

Connected, Respected and Contributing: Ireland has high levels of civic engagement but these are not uniform across all groups. Youth Work is a key method for promoting civic engagement amongst young people particularly those from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds. Youth Work Ireland can ensure a key part of its participation work is promoting civic engagement and it can work in partnership to ensure this.

Young people have in recent years criticised the education system in terms of the preparation of young people for social and civic life, young people and have consistently named the poor quality of relationships education and civic and political education as a top concern in consultative for a (Dáil na nÓg Report, 2009).

Social inclusion and the development of positive relationships is frequently cited as the purpose of youth work (Devlin and Gunning, 2011). Not surprisingly, the review of youth work evidence entitled *Youth Work: A Systematic Map of the Research Literature* (DCYA, 2013) found numerous studies measuring human and social capital outcomes in youth work that might be employed to argue for the effectiveness of youth work in terms of young people being connected, respected and contributing to their world.

The most current and relevant discussion of youth work outcomes can be found in the European Commission study *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union*, which found ample evidence to demonstrate that youth work has outcomes in this area. This review found in its discussion of the results of youth work that one of its chief outcomes for young people was to strengthen their network and their social capital, that involving young people in volunteering and contributing to the local community is a basic method of youth work and that youth work achieves outcomes for young people in raising their awareness of their rights (European Commission, 2014).

The Plan

This Strategic Plan provides a planning framework for our entire federal organisation to ensure all young people can have access to a youth service. A process of alignment of our member’s strategic plans in terms of timing and content has already begun and will continue throughout the lifetime of this plan.

This will ensure that planning locally is consistent with this plan in both timing and content while allowing for local delivery. In 2014 we engaged in an extensive consultation process meeting with all our local boards, our Youth Action Group, key external and internal stakeholders such as other NGOs, Government Departments and State Agencies. The process was overseen by a steering group comprising representatives of the key stakeholders in the organisation.

4. The Integrated Youth Service - Our Approach to Quality

Youth Work Ireland member youth services are building an Integrated Youth Service throughout the country. This model is based on our values and philosophy that sees young people as central to what we do. This accords with our values of a positive view of young people, their dignity and worth. The Integrated Youth Service ensures that a range of services and policy objectives can be delivered by one community based youth service in a seamless manner from the point of view of the young person. Such an approach overcomes the silos often present in service delivery and public policy.

This model brings other specialist providers to the process in order to enhance our approaches to LGBT work, ICTs or work with young Travellers. Acting as a one stop shop for all young people in a community the Integrated Service can refer young people to different aspects of the service where necessary. The Integrated Service provides a point of access to a range of services (under one roof) so that young people have their needs addressed in a holistic and joined up way. Local Youth Services work with young people across the five outcomes of the Better Outcomes - Brighter Future Policy Framework. **The Integrated Service is precisely that, a service, not a collection of projects, clubs and groups but a deliberately planned area based approach to serving the needs of young people in a seamless manner, eliminating segregation and the disjointed service provision.**

This model has considerable range in terms of the communities it serves across Ireland, but also in how efficient and responsive it can be to young people's needs. We illustrate a selection of our work (p.x) Under the 5 Outcomes Better Outcomes - Brighter Futures outcomes. Our **health promotion projects** ensure young people we work with experience improved mental and physical health. Our network of **employment projects** which we have grown in the current crisis provide young people with labour market skills. Our support to **afterschool projects** improves retention in school and thus young people's life chances. Our **network of youth clubs** and volunteers provide a firm foundation to young people to express themselves and belong in their community and our **counselling services and professional youth workers** ensure young people always have somewhere to turn to so that they are safe.

A pool of social capital exists and is created for the direct benefit of young people and to assist youth workers in developing services and supports for young person. The youth worker develops and sustains these relationships so that the young person can avail themselves of services and opportunities that the relationships bring them into contact with. It is more than the connections and the social capital that is necessary to bring about the benefits of the model, it is also the role of the youth worker in assisting young people to navigate, develop the motivation and goals that are required to take up the opportunities and supports that these connections entail.

We are pleased to work in partnership in delivering many aspects of the Integrated Youth Service with our national partners, Involve, Spunout, Gaisce, CDYSB, ETBI and BeLonGTo and internationally with the European Confederation of Youth Clubs and our Five Nations partners:

"We're very excited to continue working with Youth Work Ireland in the coming months and years. Our strategic partnership will ensure better outcomes for the young people we work with and maximise the strengths of our respective organisations."

(Ian Power Spunout.ie)

'BeLonG To Youth Service and Youth Work Ireland have always enjoyed a good working relationship - but this has been further enhanced in recent years, with the development of our strategic partnership. Both organisations share values in relation to the promotion and provision of quality youth work, and an understanding of the special efforts required to promote the inclusion of young people who may experience

marginalisation because of being LGB or T. There is still lots to be achieved, and we look forward to continuing this important, collaborative work - the outcome of which we believe will have a positive effect, both for LGBT young people, and the wider population of young people in Ireland.'

David Carroll (BelongTo)

It is clear that YWI are committed to delivering on their model of an integrated youth service that is inclusive of all communities within Irish society.

Involve welcomes this partnership approach by YWI as for many years young Travellers weren't attending an integrated youth service in big numbers for many reasons. It is hoped that this new partnership model will include staff training on Traveller culture and identity which will upskill staff of YWI to forge even better relationships with young Travellers based upon mutual understanding of the community.

James O'Leary (Involve)

The Integrated Youth Service can encompass a range of project provision depending on local circumstances and needs. Strong local management is key to the effective delivery of a joined up seamless service to the young person involving a range of funders, outcomes, reporting mechanisms and different public agencies. Projects, groups and clubs can all exist in an area, it is their management as a service that leads to true integration and quality outcomes for young people and real efficiency for funders.

The following are some sample projects and outcomes from our work:

- **Work Winner (Tipperary):** This employment project was designed to meet the local needs of unemployed young people in conjunction with relevant agencies in the county. Individuals who were early school leavers before entering the project were analysed on exiting to see what progression they had made since finishing the LWE project. The results were extremely positive with 76% of early school leavers progressing to training and employment after the project
- **Coxes Demense (Dundalk)** The aim of the project is to enable the personal, social and educational development of young people in the Cox's Demesne, believing in the potential within every young person and to encourage them to become actively involved in their own development and the development of their community. This is done through an After School Service, Special Projects for young people at risk, a Garda Diversion Project, a Probation Project and Youth Clubs operating from one premises in a housing estate.
- **Fishbowl Youth Club (Clare):** A group of active young people created Fishbowl Youth in 2002. The reason for setting up Fishbowl was a clear lack of a social space and respect for young people in the area. Personal development and active citizenship is at the core of the organisation. Participation and decision-making by young people are our most important operational objectives. Activities have included hosting and sending of young people on a European Voluntary Service, Facilitation in group processes and active citizenship and training and international youth work
- **SPY Project (South East):** The projects delivers structured sessions separately for boys and girls focusing on young people who are at risk and/or unattached. Young people could state boundaries within which the group operates, increased levels of participation and improved relationships with the leader team, increased ability to manage behaviours

and noticeable reduction in conflict. Greater sense of ownership over group, young people's likes and interests are catered for, new skills and interests were developed. Improved ability to recognise their own risky behaviour and increased capacity to make positive life choices, young people were open to being challenged, increased awareness of the supports available in the community

While many projects have differing outcomes the range found in our local communities under our model includes:

Work within the Integrated Youth Service	Outcomes predominantly served	Cross Cutting Work
Health Promotion projects, Clubs participating in sports programmes, counselling, LGBT and Sexual Health, Mentoring, Mental Health promotion, Drugs Initiatives	Active & healthy	Training, Conferences, Seminars, publications, submissions, Irish Youth Work Centre
After schools projects, school completion projects, youth workers services to local schools, Homework clubs, Breakfast clubs	Learning and development	Scene Magazine, library, web resources, YWI website SPY Projects
Child Protection support, Garda Vetting, Child Protection training, Garda Youth Diversion Projects, suicide prevention, Family breakdown supports, youth cafes, Peace Projects, neighborhood projects	Safe and protected from harm	YWI National policies and strategies Support for NQSF
Employment projects, formal training, entrepreneurship, Youthreach, CTCs, European and International Exchange Programmes	Economic security and opportunity	Fundraising and fundraising support Management support and development
A youth club network, support to Comhairle, Youth Advocacy, Youth Governance, support to Dail na nOg, Arts and creative projects, graffiti projects, international exchanges, Youth Music Awards, Volunteer Achievement Awards, Advocacy, Traveller Projects, young women's groups, Rural Outreach, Inter-club regional events	Connected, Respected and Contributing	Youth Information Volunteer support, training and Volunteer Achievement Award Support for the Management of the Service National Programmes and Networking Opportunities Child Protection Critical Incidence Garda Vetting Club Insurance Scheme Irish Youth Music Awards Youth Games Youth Factor National Art Programmes Nollaig - Christmas Card Creations Networking with the UK and Europe

5. Developmental Aims & Objectives

5.1 *Strengthen our Integrated Youth Service Model*

Integrated Youth Services are the central platform for how we deliver local youth services run by local communities in a seamless and efficient fashion consistent with the new policy framework - Better Outcomes Brighter Futures. **Strengthening the model, is then a key aim of our work.** The Model is supported by the national organisation and horizontally by exchange between our members. We ensure all our work in this area is guided by principles of youth work and informal learning. We will similarly focus on the best outcomes for young people prioritised in the new National Youth Strategy.

Objectives

- We will ensure the full implementation of delivery plans for the Integrated Youth Service Model for all member youth services
- We will continue to improve the quality of experience of youth club members and volunteers by, enhancing the support package to our network of youth clubs and promoting their value. In the course of this plan we will grow the number of clubs by 20%
- We will collectively draw out practice and advocacy lessons from our network of 37 Youth Justice Projects as well as mainstreaming innovative practice in our network in collaboration with the IYJS
- Our SPY Projects will continue to focus on work with disadvantaged young people in their communities
- We will continue to build on our employability projects in collaboration with other agencies such as The DSP, The Department of Education and Skills, ETBI, SOLAS, The Centre for Effective Services and others
- We will further develop and network our health promotion and mental health work by sharing best practice and replicating this across our services.
- We will continue to recognize the central role of volunteers and consolidate and renew our package of support ensuring real pathways, training and development opportunities, and updated policies. We will strengthen volunteer networks to ensure the voice of the volunteer is heard.
- We will utilize peer review processes to ensure the quality of this work
- We will identify and respond to the new geographic areas in need of more provision particularly large urban commuter belts with growing populations

5.2 *Improving and Sharing our Youth Work Practice*

Practice is how we primarily deal directly with young people through our network of workers and volunteers. Our practice is increasingly based on high levels of professional qualifications, expectations of quality and proven impact. The values we have set out in this plan are of course brought to bear in all this work. Similarly, we see the strengths and assets of young people and seek to work with them in a rights based fashion. Numerous reports, cited in the introduction to this document, underline the effectiveness of youth work interventions and the evidence for the impact of these. **Core to this work in the future will be continuing to develop our evidence base alongside the development of agreed national outcomes with funders.**

Objectives

- We will develop internal information systems, using agreed indicators and measures, based on empirical evidence through working with young people, external partners, funders and experts, which will gather information about young people's lives and the impact of our activities in relation to funding streams, our own strategic plans and national strategies.

- We will work to develop and provide supports and tools to use this information to plan, monitor and evaluate. In doing so we will prioritise the involvement of young people, taking an evidence informed approach and our effective participation in local, regional and national planning, monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- We will develop a Youth Work Ireland research policy and strategy that builds on our expertise in working with young people, community based research and action learning while drawing in new expertise through collaboration with third level institutions. Our research will address the priorities of young people, YWI members and emerging priorities in the implementation of the National Youth Strategy and associated plans.
- We will, through the participation of young people, volunteers, staff and our partners identify, evaluate and document local innovative programmes, models and methods that address the Five National Outcomes, the Core Principles of NQSF and our Values and can be demonstrated to have proven impact.
- We will share our approaches to gathering evidence and the resulting “toolbox of programmes, models and methods” that have been proven to be effective within our services.
- We will continually review YWI engagement in NQSF, NQSFVLYG and other quality frameworks, to improve our own practice and feed into national processes for reviewing quality standards and identifying learning from quality standards..
- We will continue to offer opportunities for health, fitness and expression through national local and programmes which build confidence and help tackle obesity and poor health
- We will further develop our communication channels to develop , awareness, understanding, support, involvement and action in relation to the proven impact of our programmes, models and methods with all of our stakeholders, including those in the Five Nations Group.
- We will support the publication, dissemination and use of youth work evidence;
- Build on existing best practice, supporting innovation and service learning innovation through supporting sharing and collaboration amongst all of our stakeholders including the Five Nations Group
- We will ensure that training provision for young leaders, volunteers and staff is cost-effective, oriented to this plan and sectoral strategies and YWI values and priorities (with a focus on the Integrated Youth Service Model) and coordinated with sectoral initiatives in the area of workforce development.

5.3 *Youth Participation*

We have an ambitious agenda in relation to youth participation which not only seeks to involve young people in making decisions within our organisation, but which **works towards young people participating more fully in decisions in their own lives, in our practice, their communities and in Irish society and beyond.** We are guided by Article 12 of the UNCRC in all our work in this area.

Objectives

- We will work in partnership to further develop Comhairle and Dail na nOg consistent with Ireland’s support for the UNCRC along with assisting in the development of further statutory participation policies.
- We will continue to ensure participation of young people in our work and governance locally, nationally and internationally
- We will continue to promote positive images of young people
- We will work with young people in the organisation including our Youth Action Group to ensure robust participation proofing of our work
- We will update our Participation Policy in conjunction with young people in the organization
- We will monitor the level of participation in decision making throughout the organisation

5.4 *Speaking Up for Young People and Youth Services*

Our aim is to advocate with and for young people and their rights - we will provide a greater role for unmediated voices of young people. Youth Work Ireland has had a long and distinguished record of speaking out with and on behalf of young people and those who work with them. We believe that this view of our duty to advocate with and for young people and their rights distinguishes our model and approach to youth work. In more recent years we have promoted a greater role for unmediated voices of young people directly in our advocacy work. Our work in this area is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and best practice for those over 18. We recognize the different layers in our organisation and the need for advocacy work to reflect these and the work we do in our communities' day in day out.

We will harness the local lessons and stories from our work on the ground and develop national policy messages from these. We will further utilize social media to illustrate and celebrate our work. We will gather the experiences of young people, volunteers, staff, families and communities and share these with the world around us.

Objectives

- We will continue to be a leading voice for and with young people on all public policy matters that impact on them
- We will further develop our work in youth led advocacy ensuring the unmediated voice of young people is heard in policy debates and decision making. This will include our work with Voices of Youth.
- We will draw on our day to day work by further developing systems for transmitting important lessons from it into national policy processes and linking policy and practice and academia
- We will support member services in local advocacy work
- We will continue to broaden the focus of our advocacy to reflect the relationships in the organisation particularly in the policy areas area of the National Policy Framework
- We will continue to make submissions on all relevant policy areas and ensure young people's involvement in these and ensure policy makers are aware of our issues and concerns
- We will advocate with and on behalf of young people to the general public based on our experience
- We will upskill staff to make links between practice and advocacy
- We will support the use of local media in this area

5.5 *Finance and Resources*

Youth Work organisations along with many other groups have suffered inordinately from the economic collapse and Government cutbacks resulting from this. Youth Work Ireland recognizes the pressing necessity to secure and improve state funding to support the vital work we do in local communities and at the same time to build new income streams. Our funding from the state is also quite diverse with support coming from the DCYA, The Irish Youth Justice Service, The DSP, The Department of Education and local development organisations via The Department of the Environment and Local Government. As a not for profit we are constantly providing value for money. Such an ambition means changes in the organisation or articulating our work in a different way and a focus on new and different aspects of our work.

Objectives

- We will work collaboratively with funders to ensure resources support the infrastructure for youth work, delivery and the Integrated Youth Service Model.
- We will work towards income diversification with new sources of funding in a creative way
- We will enhance our branding and public profile with clear messages to achieve this
- We will seek European and international support for our work in a planned and strategic fashion
- We will build the capacity of our members in this field
- We will facilitate an increase in social enterprise throughout the organisation
- We will work toward a more diversified funding base to contribute to our independence
- We will further develop shared services in all aspects of back office work or wherever efficiencies can be realized.

5.6 *Acting together for greater impact*

To deliver on an ambitious plan our structures and procedures must be up to the task. While valuing the huge strength of a federal structure which responds to local needs we also recognize the imperative of acting cohesively together in terms of national policies, the needs of funders and ensuring we are creative and innovative in our work. **Greater cohesion and alignment within our federal structure, while respecting its value**, will provide better outcomes for young people. There is a responsibility on all elements of the federation locally and nationally to act to achieve this. Our structure provides value for money and has allowed us to survive through some of the most difficult times.

Objectives

- We will continue to strengthen our members and young people's sense of belonging and identity with Youth Work Ireland
- We will align our members Strategic Plans with this plan in terms of timing and broad content over the lifetime of this plan
- We will further develop agreed communications and cohesion mechanisms to ensure our model and reach is understood by all, working toward a universal brand over the course of the plan
- We will continue to hone and improve our governance to ensure timely, effective and efficient procedures and decision making with clear accountability in delivering our services
- We will continue to improve our data gathering systems redesigning them to more effectively capture our work and the experience and outcomes for young people.
- We will consolidate our structure up to and including amalgamations where it will achieve better outcomes for young people
- We will document our work areas, processes and products to ensure a level of consistency and quality within the federation
- We will strive to simplify our message, identity and how people understand us. We will work with experts in the field to advance our work in this area.